Local Government Informational Tutorial: Facilitating Success: A Clerk's Guide to Training Newly Elected Officials

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History Lesson - Beginning

The “Why” of it

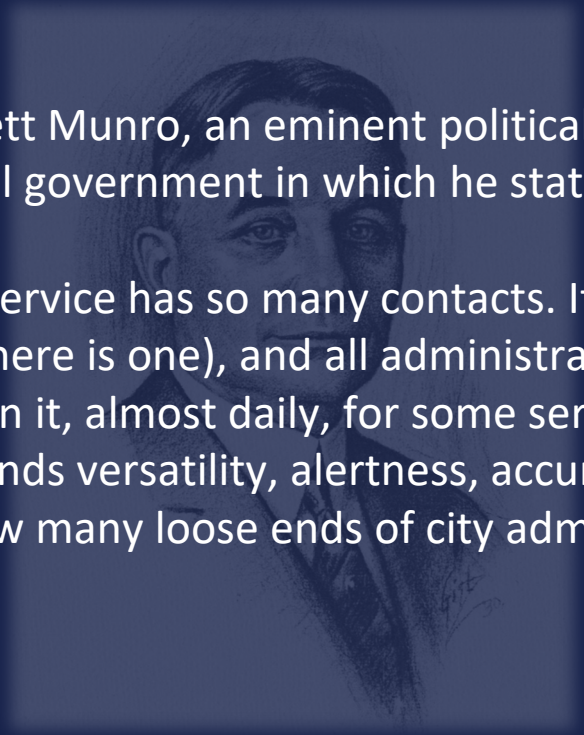
Core Topics to Cover

Structure of the Training

Tools, Templates, and Tips

Resources Available

Beginning



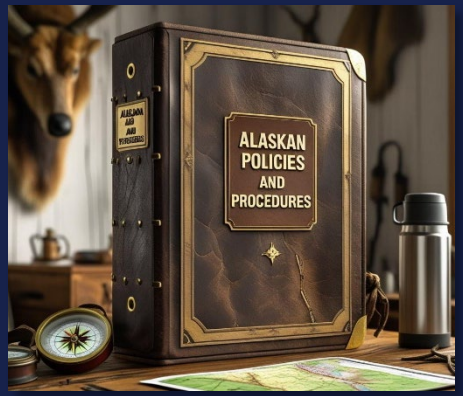
1934, Professor William Bennett Munro, an eminent political scientist, wrote one of the first textbooks about municipal government in which he states about the office of the municipal clerk:
“No other office in municipal service has so many contacts. It serves the Mayor, the Council, the Manager (when there is one), and all administrative departments without exception. All of them call upon it, almost daily, for some service or information. Its work is not spectacular, but it demands versatility, alertness, accuracy, and no end of patience. The public does not realize how many loose ends of city administration this office pulls together.”

OBJECTIVES

Roles: A position or job that has certain expectations that go with them.

- Understand the clerk's onboarding role
- Design and deliver effective training
- Address specific governance needs
- Build a reusable training toolkit





Why Clerk-Led Training Matters

Clerks play a role in promoting training for members of the governing body.



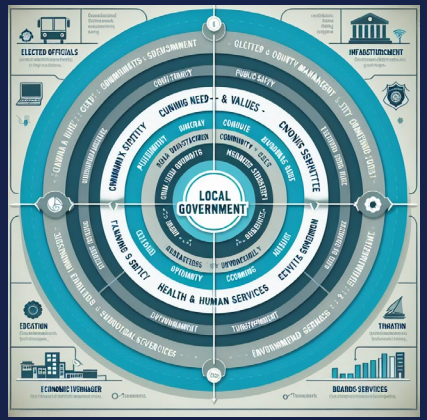
- Clerks are the institutional memory
- Set expectations and tone early
- Promote transparency and legal compliance

Serve as Staff– Governing Bodies

The clerk is generally the principal staff for members of the governing body and often serves as a sounding board for elected officials. It is crucial that the clerk remain impartial and never take sides in conflict amongst members. Above all, the clerk should maintain a high standard of integrity, professionalism and confidentiality.

Clerks are often asked to research issues and supply elected officials with the information they need to make educated and sound decisions for the community they serve. Clerks may also draft ordinances and resolutions for elected officials and city administration

Core Topics to Cover



- Open Meetings Act & Public Records
- Ethics and Conflicts of Interest
- Parliamentary Procedure
- Due Process
- Roles of Mayor, Council, and Staff
- Technology and Communication Protocols

Structuring the Training

A good rule to remember in training situations: "*What is routine to you seems very complex and confusing to a newcomer*." The more complete the information presented, the better the learning process.

Explaining the process and asking if there are questions

Provide written documents

Show some hands-on examples

Give a general explanation of the services provided by the clerk's office and the value of those services to the community (provide a list of other municipal employees and their main duties and responsibilities)

- Work session vs. in-person formats
- Mix lecture, discussion, and activities

Tools and Templates



- Sample welcome packet
- Agenda and slide deck templates
- Role-play scenarios and mock meetings

Presentation Tips for Clerks

Be clear, concise, and confident

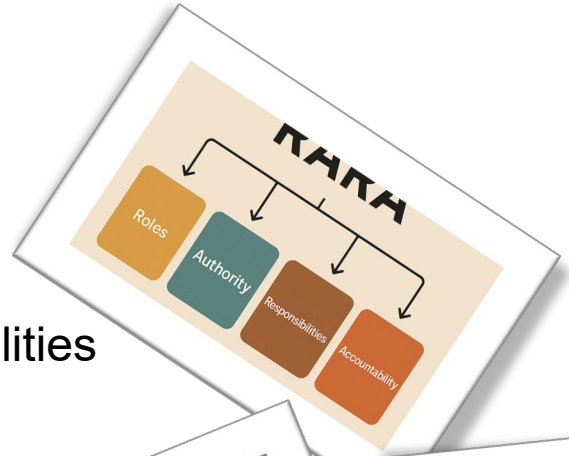
Use real examples and stories

Encourage questions and dialogue

Handle resistance and conflict professionally

Specific Considerations

- Municipal classifications
- State and city mandated responsibilities
- Roles and responsibilities







Build Your Clerk Training Toolkit

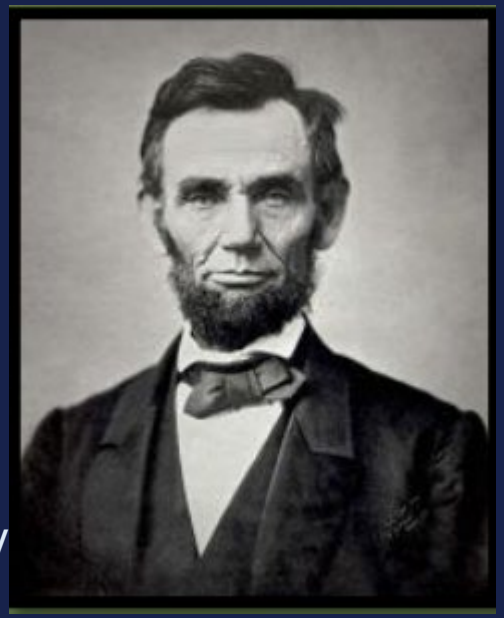
- Launch checklist
- Peer collaboration
- Attend trainings
- Continuous improvement



- LGA/RUBA resources and training
- AAMC/IIMC education and career path
- AML Newly Elected Officials Training

Success

In 1858, Abraham Lincoln said: "Public sentiment is everything. With public sentiment, nothing can fail; without it, nothing can succeed. Consequently he who moulds public sentiment goes deeper than he who enacts statutes or pronounces decisions. He makes statutes and decisions possible or impossible to be executed." Since the municipal clerk is the main contact citizens have with their government, a unique opportunity exists to mold favorable public sentiment. By responding to citizens in an efficient and willing manner, with a courteous and helpful attitude, good public relations between the municipal government and the community can be assured.



Resources

Local Government Resource Desk:

https://www.commerce.alaska.gov/web/dcra/LocalGovernmentResourceDesk

Join us October 23 for Community Development Block Grant - CDBG